

The COVID-19 pandemic first became real to me when I learned that my high-school was closing and would use virtual platforms instead. My first reaction was, okay, this won't last long, maybe a week or two. But as the weeks and months passed, I realized I would not be returning to the halls of Huntington High School. This meant my peers and I would not have a traditional end to our senior year and all the experiences that go with it. We would have no final band concert or play, no senior prom, no graduation ceremony and no last day of school to say thank you and goodbye to our dear teachers and friends. Many milestones like these were lost because of the pandemic, causing disruption, disappointment and sorrow in my life and many other lives.

Especially in the beginning, fears and anxiety filled the air regarding catching COVID-19 and what would happen if someone did get it. I remember being scared by the ever-present media coverage and being very fearful that my grandparents and parents would contract the disease, and maybe even die. On the other hand, staying safe by sheltering at home every day made me feel lonely and isolated. When we do venture out, everyone wears masks and keeps their distance from each other. People were afraid and suspicious of each other because they might get infected. Seeing people with face coverings and behaving this way strikes me as strange and something out of a science fiction movie.

The pandemic has affected me positively to a degree. With my family all working and schooling from home, I have grown closer to them, cooking meals and playing board games together each night. I have a better appreciation and understanding of my parents' jobs and what they do. I have become adept and using zoom and google

meetings and other virtual learning tools. Because of remote learning, I have developed into a more independent student. The circumstances of COVID-19 have caused me to appreciate the small and ordinary parts of life, like feeling the warm sun on my face, gardening, walking my dog, riding my bicycle and reading a book just for fun. If there is a silver lining to the dark cloud of COVID-19, this would be it for me.